

Interview

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Sushi and English both communications tools

東京・品川区にある松乃鮨の四代目を務める Yoshi こと手塚良則さんは、外国人向けのすし講座や海外への出張握りを英語で実施しているが、中学・高校時代は英語が得意な同級生に対して引け目を感じていたという。英語力を本業に活かすようになったきっかけなどを伺った。

When Yoshi, or Yoshinori Tezuka, talks about sushi, his eye shine and his face lights up. Sushi is his passion and he is **keen** to share it with the world. You might even call him a “sushi ambassador.”

Tezuka’s family has been in the sushi business for four generations. Today, he works alongside his father at the family restaurant, Matsunozushi in Shinagawa, but after graduating from college he was as a ski instructor and tour guide.

Based mainly in Europe and North America, he guided Japanese tourists to some of the world’s best ski fields, as well as on cruises, for four years.

“I knew I would be a chef in the future. I wanted to tell foreign visitors about Japanese culture and life. I also wanted to be able to understand their cultures and countries,” he says.

You might assume Tezuka has always been interested in English, but **that isn’t the case.**

“I attended a private junior and senior high school with a lot of **returnee** students. Everyone studied English together. The school hoped that being with the returnees would help encourage students like me. Actually, it had the opposite effect. If I made a mistake, sometimes people laughed. Nobody intended to be **mean**, but I felt embarrassed about my English and just stopped trying,” he recalls.

Things changed in his third year of university when a supportive teacher showed him a new way of

looking at English.

“She told me that English is a communication tool. It doesn’t have to be perfect as long as you can make yourself understood. I am definitely a **people person**, so this advice **made sense** to me. It was like my eyes opened! I felt **inspired** to try again with English.”

Tezuka studied for a year in the U.S., then at age 26 came back to Japan for his sushi chef training.

“When I joined the family business, we had very few non-Japanese customers,” Tezuka says. He worked to change that. He now offers tours to introduce international visitors and residents to the world of sushi. Like English, Tezuka believes that sushi can be a communication tool: “Sushi can please the customer and help them to understand about Japanese culture, the different seasons and various tastes.”

When **tour participants** come to Matsunozushi, they eat alongside the regular Japanese customers.

“I want to give my international guests the same experience that my dad has been giving to Japanese guests, but just with the extra language and cultural support they may need,” says Tezuka, who also **lectures** to exchange students, and has represented Japan at culinary conferences overseas.

“One day I would like to lecture about sushi at overseas universities, too,” he says, his eyes shining at the thought. (Louise George Kittaka)

手塚 良則 (てづか よしのり)

東京都出身。慶應義塾大学商学部卒業後、スキーガイドとしてヨーロッパ・北米に4年間駐在。2015年7月、ミラノ万博JAPANDAYでの和食エキシビション、2016年9月トリノのslow food世界大会で握り鮨を披露する。海外での出張握りなどを通じて、鮨文化や日本のおもてなしの心を伝えている。



THE JAPAN TIMES

Words to live by

“Stay hungry. Stay foolish.”

アップルの創始者スティーブ・ジョブズの言葉です。新しいアイデアを求め、人ができないことに恐れず挑戦することが大事だと思います。周囲の目から見れば、なじみ客ばかりだった老舗すし屋に外国人客が来るようになるなど、あり得ないことだったかもしれません。

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keen 熱心な。that ... case そうではない。returnee 帰国子女。mean 意地悪な。people person 社交的な人。made sense 筋が通っていた。inspired 刺激された。participants 参加者。lectures 講義をする。

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WEB Version

keen 熱心な。great grandfather 曾祖父。stable 安定した。hardships 大変さ。from scratch ゼロから。degree 学位。that ... case そうではない。returnee 帰国子女。mean 意地悪な。people person 社交的な人 made sense 筋が通っていた。inspired 刺激された。cater to ～～に向けて商売をする。participants 参加者。lectures 講義をする。

WEB:

When Yoshi Tezuka talks about sushi, his eye shine and his face lights up. Sushi is his passion and he is **keen** to share it with the world. In fact, you might even call him a “sushi ambassador.”

Tezuka’s family has been in the sushi business for four generations, beginning with his **great grandfather**.

“Ever since I was a little kid, I wanted to follow in the family business,” he says. “Actually, my dad was against it at first. He thought a more **stable** job would be easier for me. He knew the **hardships** of the business. For example, we lost the shop to a big fire once and started again **from scratch**.”

Today, Tezuka works alongside his father at the family restaurant, Matsunozushi in Shinagawa. However, he had a completely different career after graduating from college with a business degree: working as a ski instructor and tour guide. He has skied since childhood, and decided to move abroad to learn more about the world and different cultures.

Based mainly in Europe and North America, he guided Japanese tourists to some of the world’s best ski fields, as well as on cruises, for four years.

“I knew I would be a chef in the future. I wanted to tell foreign visitors about Japanese culture and life. I also wanted to be able to understand their cultures and countries,” he says.

“I moved around every week, and I traveled to more than 50 countries. I enjoyed it all, but I think maybe Italy was my favorite coun-

try,” he recalls.

With this background, you might assume that Tezuka has always been interested in English. However, that isn’t the case.

“I attended a private junior and senior high school with a lot of **returnee** students. Everyone studied English together. The school hoped that being with the returnees would help and encourage students like me. Actually, it had the opposite effect. If I made a mistake, sometimes people laughed. Nobody intended to be **mean**, but I felt embarrassed about my English and just stopped trying,” he recalls.

Things changed in his third year of university when a supportive teacher showed him a new way of looking at English.

“She told me that English is a communication tool. It doesn’t have to be perfect as long as you can make yourself understood. I am definitely a **people person**, so this advice **made sense** to me. It was like my eyes opened! I felt **inspired** to try again with English.”

Tezuka went on to study abroad in the U.S. for a year to improve his skills.

At the age of 26, Tezuka came back to Japan and began his sushi chef training.

“When I joined the family business, we had very few non-Japanese customers. Our customers were those who came often, or were introduced by other regular customers. We didn’t **cater to** ichigenkyaku — people who just happen to pass by,” he explains.

Tezuka worked to change that. He now offers tours to introduce international visitors and residents

to the world of sushi. Like English, Tezuka believes that sushi can be a communication tool: “Sushi can please the customer, and help them to understand about Japanese culture, the different seasons and various tastes.”

“I take my guests to the fish market to show them the different kinds of fish. For example, I tell them about fish from each prefecture, or how the taste of the fish changes according to the season.”

When the **participants** come to Matsunozushi, they eat alongside the regular Japanese customers. “We don’t have a special ‘foreigners’ day’ or anything like that. I want to give my international guests the same experience that my dad has been giving to Japanese guests, but just with the extra language and cultural support they may need,” says Tezuka.

One of Matsunozushi’s specialties is carefully researching each guest’s needs and tastes in advance. This allows the restaurant to prepare the perfect sushi for each guest. “We can cater for vegetarians or vegans, or those with special dietary needs such as halal foods or gluten-free,” Tezuka notes.

Tezuka’s activities have led to other chances to bring his love of sushi culture to the world. He **lectures** to exchange students in Japan, and has represented Japan at culinary conferences overseas.

“Looking ahead, one day I would like to lecture about sushi at overseas universities, too,” he says, his eyes shining at the thought.